

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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HALVES.

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CHAPTER XXIX. FLIGHT.

It was somehow contrived that there should be no coroner's inquest, for the omission of which, indeed, there were many urgent reasons. Since Mr. Raeburn himself was an attorney, we may conclude that the law was not outraged in the matter; while it should be mentioned also that neither he nor his son (unless the instance I have mentioned could be called evasion) showed the least disposition to evade inquiry. They only stipulated, in case any such were necessary, that it should be held elsewhere than at the Priory—which the condition of the two invalids obviously demanded. Thanks to the judicious supervision of nurse Hopkins, Gertrude was not made aware of the calamity that had befallen the household, and was reported by Mr. Wilde to be progressing favourably. Whether brother Alec had been made acquainted with the matter or not, I was not informed; but the wail of his wakeful bird, with its "Dead, dead, dead! Only think of that!" discoursed nightly, through the partition-wall, of nothing else.

Mark Raeburn looked utterly broken by his bereavement; the far-back memory of the dead had, perhaps, something tender for him whereon to feed his thought; or, what is more likely, this strong prop being thus suddenly removed from his side, he was unable to bear up without it. He went about the house a piteous spectacle, or sat in his brother's room with John, or

alone. Dr. Doldrum redeemed his promise and visited him repeatedly, but, notwithstanding that the resources of science were so "boundless," benefited him nothing. If the doctor feared that Mr. Wilde would have taken umbrage at his professional attentions, he was mistaken. When I told him how the former had volunteered his services to the attorney, and that they had been accepted, he only replied, "Thank Heaven," and seemed well content.

On the day before the funeral, which was arranged for as early a date as possible, Mr. Wilde came down to speak to me as usual after he had seen Gertrude.

She was greatly better, and it was in contemplation that she would soon be removed to Stanbrook, where my aunt had made every preparation to receive her. These tidings lifted the weight of depression that had so long hung about my spirits, and made them so buoyant that I almost reproached myself for feeling such gladness in so sad a house. But in Mr. Wilde's face there was no reflection of my satisfaction:

"It is good news, indeed, so far as Miss Floyd is concerned," said he, in explanation of his gravity; "but there is more trouble in store, I fear, for this unhappy family."

"Surely no one suspects——" said I.

"No, no," interrupted he; "the death of that wretched woman has absolved her from human laws; but something else is wrong under this roof. See here."

He produced from his pocket an official-looking letter. It was from Mr. Sinclair, the secretary of the Life Insurance Company in London, and set forth that, although Mr. Alexander Raeburn's quarterly payment had been made the previous

week, there had been an informality in it, which he (Mr. Wilde) was requested to set right. The medical certificate of the invalid's inability to repair to London in person ought to have been forwarded, as in the first instance, notwithstanding that Mr. Sinclair was himself acquainted with the facts of the case. Under the distressing circumstance that had befallen the household, the secretary had written to Mr. Wilde direct, instead of advising Mr. Raeburn of the matter.

"Well, you had better see Mr. Alexander, and send the certificate, had you not?" said I. "There will be no difficulty in that, of course?"

"Perhaps not; but observe, Mr. Sinclair says, 'as in the first instance.' Now I have never sent any certificate to Mr. Sinclair at all. Consequently the one he did receive, if signed with my name, must have been a forgery."

This idea was overwhelming; everything had been so mysterious, in connection with brother Alec's illness, of late months that nothing seemed incredible; at the same time, the matter seemed capable of explanation.

"The first certificate," urged I, "may have been sent from the doctor at the seaside, just before Mr. Alexander returned from it."

"Then why should Mr. Sinclair write to me? I had no reason to suppose that he even knew of my existence."

"Mr. Raeburn, or John, may have mentioned you as the medical attendant of the family."

"It is just possible," answered the doctor, thoughtfully.

"At all events," said I, "nothing can be easier than to see one of them and get the matter explained at once."

"Not to-day," answered Mr. Wilde; "I will wait till after the funeral. In the meantime I will leave this note for Mr. Raeburn; you will make sure he gets it. He should have notice of the application at once, I think; and Mr. Sinclair must wait a post for my reply."

So, therefore, it was arranged. I gave the letter to John that afternoon with my own hands, and he took it up to his father.

In the evening John came down to keep me company for awhile. He looked ill and wretched, and said that he found his uncle's room intolerable to sit alone in.

"But your father is there, is he not?"

"No; I forgot to tell you, he has

asked Mrs. Hopkins's permission to see Gertrude, and he is now with her."

"I hope not to tell her about your poor mother?" cried I, whom this news alarmed on Gerty's account.

At present she believed that Mrs. Raeburn was suffering from severe indisposition, and expressed her hope that she should soon be permitted to tend her. She was quite unaware, also, of the Stanbrook project, which was not to be revealed to her till the next afternoon.

"No, no," said John, with the same absent and abstracted air that I had noticed in him for the last few days; "he will be sure not to speak of that to Gertrude. He has other things to tell her."

I did not like that notion either, for the "other things" would probably be business matters, to which she was surely in no condition to listen; yet I was obliged to be content.

The topic was not resumed, nor did John speak upon any other, except in monosyllables, throughout the evening. The elastic nature of the poor young fellow seemed unable to assert itself under its load, whether of present grief or coming trouble. I was of course present at the funeral, which took place on the ensuing forenoon at the Kirkdale cemetery, which stands without the town, and near the railway station. It was very fully attended, out of regard for Mark of course, rather than for his dead wife, who, in truth, did not leave a single friend behind her. My uncle was one of those present, and my aunt, he told me, had accompanied him to Kirkdale in a roomy carriage, in which it had been arranged by Mr. Wilde that Gertrude should be taken to the Rectory that very day. If it was found necessary to tell her what had happened, she would more easily recover from the shock at Stanbrook, he thought, than at the Priory; but, as a matter of fact, they did not tell her till long afterwards. Aunt Eleanor had invented the fiction that Mrs. Raeburn's indisposition was infectious, though not dangerous, and thereby persuaded Gerty to leave the house, without an attempt to see her hostess. Her removal had been effected before I returned to the Priory. Mr. Raeburn and his son had departed from the cemetery in their mourning-coach as they had come, alone, and had not yet come back, when I arrived on foot by a shorter way. Anything more desolate and dismal than that death-stricken

house it was impossible to picture; and when I saw Mr. Wilde come up the drive, I ran out to meet him with a cry of joy. He told me that Gertrude had been got into the carriage without difficulty or objection. She was the meekest of patients, he said, and would, no doubt, prove the best of wives. This allusion to my daily strengthening hopes was made, I have no doubt, to cheer me, and in mitigation of some other news of a different sort that he had brought with him.

"Mr. Raeburn and his son have gone off by train to London," said he, abruptly.

"Gone to London!" cried I. "Why, they never hinted a word of such intention. I have been expecting them home every moment for this half-hour."

"What I tell you is true, however," answered Mr. Wilde; "and it is my impression you will never see either of them again."

"Then poor Mr. Raeburn must have learnt the facts about his wife and Gertrude?" said I, calling to mind the attorney's interview with the latter the previous night.

"No, Sheddon, I think not. If I know Mrs. Raeburn's character, she was not one to make a confidant in anything, far less in a crime of her own compassing. She destroyed my letter, too, you may be sure, before she—died."

The pause had such significance in it that it could not escape my attention.

"Good heavens!" cried I, "do you mean that she destroyed herself?"

"I do not know, Sheddon; I do not wish to know," replied Mr. Wilde, gravely; "but such is my belief. When I sent nurse Hopkins with that letter indeed, I half suspected that the next thing I should hear of Mrs. Raeburn would be that she was dead; and hence it was that I warned you not to send for me in case she needed medical aid. If you had done so, I should have discovered the truth, and must have told it. Dr. Doldrum," added my companion grimly, "has fortunately a great opinion of 'the heart' as a cause of mortality."

"Then you really think that this wretched woman committed suicide?" said I, aghast.

"I do," answered Mr. Wilde, decisively; "and I think I can guess the means employed. So sudden a death is suggestive of a particular poison, and of that I happen to know (for I wrote out the authorisation for it to the chemist) she purchased some a few months back, to put an end to

a savage dog, which she said was troubling the house."

"That was poor Mr. Alec's bull-dog, Fury," said I, "no doubt. It disappeared quite suddenly."

"Very likely. She did not, however, use it all, I think, for that purpose."

"But, suppose, getting impatient of her slower method," suggested I in horror, "she had given it to Gertrude!"

"She was too wise for that, Sheddon. She guessed that I had my suspicions about her, and that I should not have attributed a catastrophe such as hers, had it happened in Gertrude's case, to natural causes—Well, you and I alone are the depositaries of that secret, and it must go no farther. There is another about to disclose itself within here, unless I am mistaken, which will have to be divulged to all the world."

We had been talking hitherto in the carriage drive, but my companion now led the way into the house.

"I am come here, you know, to see Mr. Mark Raeburn about that certificate of his brother's illness. Since he has gone away, I must needs apply to the patient himself. Will you come with me upstairs to Mr. Alexander?"

CHAPTER XXX. RUIN.

AFTER the gloomy incident of the morning, and the terrible revelation I had just heard from my companion's lips, a mere visit to a sick man was not an ordeal from which I had any reason to shrink; and yet the thought of it oppressed me more than all the rest. I had not yet got over the shock of that silent interview with brother Alec, the circumstances of which, contrasted with my uncle's experience of his condition, were so inexplicable to me; and his apartments, perhaps from my long and mysterious exclusion from them, had a sort of Bluebeard's chamber "attraction of repulsion" for me, which I was ashamed to confess, even to myself. It was with a beating heart, therefore, that I followed Mr. Wilde upstairs, past the chamber from which, though she had left me so desolate, I felt thankful that my darling had been removed, and the door of which now stood open for the first time for months; past the room, too, from which its lifeless tenant had been borne that morning, and where my own eyes had made the search, the result of which had caused her to perish miserably by her own hand.

At the door of brother Alec's sitting-

room Mr. Wilde made a moment's pause, then entered abruptly and without knocking, and I followed close upon his heels. It was, as I expected to find it, vacant; then he passed swiftly through into the other room, from which, as usual, the light was almost excluded by curtains and shutters. In the bed I could just discern the form of the sick man, with his face turned towards the darkened window. Mr. Wilde approached it, but it did not move.

"Mr. Raeburn, Mr. Raeburn!" cried I loudly, for the silence, as before, was getting intolerable to me. "Mr. Wilde has come to see you; will you not speak to him?"

There was a moment's pause, and then the monotonous cry that I knew so well broke forth at my elbow: "Dead, dead, dead! Only think of that!"

"The parrot is right," observed Mr. Wilde, calmly.

"Great Heaven!" cried I, in horror, "you don't mean to say that Mr. Alexander is lying there a corpse?"

"There is no Mr. Alexander here at all, Sheddon," answered my companion, and, at the same time, he threw open the shutters, and let a flood of light into the room. Then I saw that the thing I had taken for the invalid was but a bundle of clothes, cunningly disposed so as to represent a human form. Everything in the apartment was in accordance with its character of sick room: the phials on the mantelpiece, the watcher's chair by the bedside, spoke of ministrations and tendance; but of the man for whom these tokens of solicitude existed there was no trace.

"What on earth has become of him? Dead or alive, where is he hidden?" asked I, in amazement.

"I cannot answer that question, Sheddon," replied Mr. Wilde; "though that he is dead—and buried—I have no doubt. What you saw a week ago was this same Eidolon—this counterfeit presentment—which we see now, and in my opinion there has been nothing else here for months. Mr. Alexander Raeburn never returned from Sandi-beach."

"But I have seen him, certainly once since then, for I conversed with him; and my uncle has had two interviews with him—one in Mr. Sinclair's presence, and the other alone, not a week ago!"

"You have all been deceived, Sheddon, though by what means I cannot guess. Mr. Alexander was never here; of that I

am confident. The forged certificate; the seclusion in which his family shrouded him; and, above all, this pretence of his presence here, convince me of the fact. Some one has played his part on the few occasions when it was necessary, and played it successfully."

A sudden revelation, in the likeness of John Raeburn to his uncle, here broke in upon me.

"It must have been John Raeburn!" cried I. "I remember now that he was said to be away from home on both dates of my uncle's coming. It must have been he who lay in that bed, and fooled us all."

"And to some purpose, too," observed Mr. Wilde, grimly, "since he thereby obtained two payments of an annuity for a man who was dead and buried. He must have forged the medical certificate, too, in the first instance, which brought the secretary down from town, and if he had but known that a second was necessary, this game might have gone on for years. It is not an original idea, Sheddon. There was a bishop once, who, thanks to an intelligent housekeeper, received his episcopal revenues for several quarters after his demise; but it was a very clever contrivance, for all that."

The cynical tone of my companion jarred upon my feelings. The ingenuity of this nefarious scheme excited in me no admiration. I only thought of the shame of its discovery, which must not only overwhelm the perpetrators of the fraud, but affect others wholly innocent of it. I now perceived why my uncle Hastings had been fixed upon to certify to the fact of Alexander Raeburn's existence; the guilelessness of his nature, and the carelessness with which all business matters, whether of his own or others, was transacted by him, had pointed him out as a fit instrument for the attorney's designs. Moreover, he was a personal acquaintance of Mr. Sinclair's, which had, of course, assisted in putting that gentleman off his guard. I called to mind the agitation which Mark Raeburn had exhibited on the occasion of the secretary's coming, and his exhilaration of spirits when the ordeal above stairs had been successfully concluded, and recognised their cause.

"Is there no possible way, think you, Mr. Wilde?" inquired I, "whereby this matter may be hushed up and restitution made?"

"It is quite out of the question,"

answered my companion; "for my part, I have done enough already to save the tenants of this house from public shame. It is impossible for us to explain Mr. Alexander Raeburn's absence; and it is necessary on all accounts that his death should be proved. Come—you had better come home with me for the present, since this house will be in the hands of the police before nightfall. I should not be doing my duty if I did not communicate with them and with the Assurance Society at once."

I was about to turn away to accompany my companion from the room, when the voice of the parrot once more was heard in imploring tones: "Dead, dead! think of that! Poor Poll, poor Poll!"

Chico's once ample vocabulary had dwindled down to those few pitiful words. Their eloquence, however, was not lost upon me, and taking up his cage I carried the bird from the deserted room, determined that henceforth, for brother Alec's sake, it should form a part of my own goods and chattels—a resolve on which I had, afterwards, good cause for self-congratulation. It was impossible for me to proceed at once to Stanbrook, since my presence would almost certainly be required in Kirkdale by the authorities, so I gladly accepted Mr. Wilde's offer of hospitality, and, while staying under his roof, I became acquainted, through the investigations that followed, with various particulars respecting the attorney and his son, who both, to my great contentment, contrived to leave England before the law could be brought to bear upon them.

Mark Raeburn's love of speculation had ruined him long before I had made his acquaintance, and when his name and credit in the district still stood high. After losing his own money, he lost that of his wife, who had had a considerable dower of her own, besides that West India estate, her involuntary disconnection with which had made the Emancipation question such a tender topic with her. The knowledge that he had done her this wrong no doubt assisted to give her that supremacy over him, which had ended in an unmitigated despotism. After these mischances, the attorney strove to right matters by speculating with the fortune of his cousin Gertrude, which he also lost. I heard this part of his sad story from her own lips, as she had heard it from his, on that last interview he had with her before

his flight. He made a clean breast of all his iniquities so far as she was concerned, and I need not say that she forgave him. Why he did so, I am not certain; but I think it was to exonerate his son from any share in them. Up to the time that that bubble of expectations from brother Alec had burst, I believe John to have been wholly innocent of his father's schemes, as Mark, in his turn, was of his wife's attempted crime. In other respects the attorney and his wife worked together, I have little doubt, and had no secrets from one another. Having once stooped to defraud his cousin, he had no scruples as to his other clients, and almost all my uncle's little property had gone the way of Gertrude's. Mark had disposed of the securities, which were not, and never had been, in Kirkdale bank; and the duplicates I had found were merely imitations of them, far too clumsy to have been concocted by the deft fingers of John Raeburn. Had he been intrusted with the task, my suspicions would probably never have been aroused, and indeed his innocence was established by the fact of his having procured me a sight of the papers, in his father's absence. On the latter's return from the seaside, he had been compelled to make his son his confidant, and henceforth the partner in his frauds. It was John who had written in his uncle's name from Sandibeach, where, perhaps, the old man was already dead, or dying—he had been buried there under the name of Prescott, as was afterwards discovered—and John, under pretence, as usual, of a business journey elsewhere, had gone thither, and been brought back from thence in his uncle's stead, to play the rôle of the sick man at the Priory.

He did so to perfection, including the forging of the receipts of his quarterly payments from the Assurance Office; but I will do him the justice to say that his dishonesty went wholly against the grain with him. He was not, of course, a well-principled lad in any sense, but his nature was neither cruel nor unkind, and I believe revolted against the very scheme which his ingenuity for a time rendered so successful. If poverty be any excuse for crime, it was so in his case (not to mention that he was spurred on by his own parents to commit it), for it turned out that the Raeburns had had little else to maintain them, at the time of my coming to live with them, beyond my premium, and the annual sum paid for my board and lodg-

ing; while, afterwards, they lived on the credit accorded to them by reason of their expectations from brother Alec, which they were well aware would never be realised. It was, doubtless, in the embarrassment produced by this state of affairs in its earlier stage, and in the knowledge that his defalcations must needs be brought to light, in case Gertrude should become engaged out of the family, that inspired the attorney with the idea of persuading me that her hand was already promised to John. Very likely the notion of having her for their daughter-in-law had at one time occurred to the old couple, but before my coming to the Priory I am sure that Mrs. Raeburn at least had given up the plan as impracticable. She read Gertrude's character too thoroughly to deceive herself in that respect. It was not till matters grew desperate, that this wretched woman conceived the crime which she had been within such a little of having accomplished; and I again assert my confident belief that neither her husband nor her son were privy to her design. There were degrees and grades of guilt in these three persons, each strongly marked. John's transgression, though he took such an active part in the plot, was almost of a negative character; the attorney, by long misdoing, had become reckless and fraudulent to the core; while Mrs. Raeburn was ruthless from the beginning, and stuck at nothing. Of her I shall presently have a word or two more to say in proof of that harsh judgment.

These facts or convictions did not present themselves to me at once, nor within a brief space; it was weeks before my presence at Kirkdale could be dispensed with by the authorities, and my mind was compelled to concern itself with these sad matters, from the consideration of which it would gladly have escaped. Otherwise, I had sufficiently bitter food for reflection in the position of my own affairs. Not only was Gertrude's fortune lost, but my own little property, which had been confided by Mr. Hastings, along with his own, to the attorney's keeping, was also gone. Not only, therefore, had I no expectations for the future, but no means, however anxious I might be to make up for previous idleness by application to my legal studies, of continuing them. The question was no longer, When should we marry? but, How should we each subsist apart? From the ruins of her property, indeed, the at-

torney had pointed out how a small income might be derived for Gertrude's maintenance, but the sum was so slender as scarcely to afford her the necessaries of life. She wrote to me hopefully, but I had not the courage to reply to her in a similar strain. I was a beggar; and though the thought seemed to pull my heart up by the roots, I felt that it would be my duty to release her from an engagement, which it might never be in my power to redeem.

If I had had anywhere else whither to betake myself, I should have avoided the temptation of going to the Rectory while Gertrude remained under its roof; but there was no alternative for me in the matter, and so soon as I was permitted to leave Kirkdale I bade good-bye to my kind host, and, sick at heart, departed for my old home.

SERVIA.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THROUGH the unexpected rising in the Herzegovina, Servia, its prince, and people have once more been brought prominently before the world. The enthusiasm of the Servians for the cause of the insurgents runs so high, that probably nothing but the influence of the Great Powers restrains their government from plunging into war with Turkey—though apparently at odds very adverse—on behalf of their struggling Bosnian brethren. The events now occurring, with the important developments which they may any day receive, tend to awaken feelings of interest, greater than Western Europe has ever yet shown, in the past annals and the possible future of the little state, which aspires to be to Slavonian Turkey what Piedmont was to regenerated Italy. The recent history of Servia, moreover, besides its bearing upon the course of events which Time has yet to unfold, possesses many points of interest in itself.

The Servians form a distinct branch of the great Slavonian race: that race spread over so many countries and political divisions, yet so closely united in its sympathies. In common with other Slavonic tribes, the Servians first appeared on the borders of the Roman Empire about A.D. 527. They settled in their present home, the limits of which nearly correspond with the Roman pro-

vince of Moesia Superior, in the early part of the seventh century.

Procopius (*De Bello Goth. III.*) has succinctly sketched the characteristics of the Slavonic tribes when they first pressed upon the Empire of the East:—"The Slavonians," says the Byzantine historian, "do not obey a single master, but live under a democratical government; the gains and losses are common amongst them, and all other things go in the same way. . . . They live in miserable huts, standing isolated, and they change their settlements. In a battle many of them fight on foot, armed only with a small target and a lance; they do not wear any armour. They all speak the same very barbarous language, and do not differ much in their exterior. Their complexion is not very white, and their hair is neither fair nor black, but dark. Like the Massagetæ, they lead a rude and wandering life. Their mind is neither malicious nor fraudulent, and they preserve the manners of the Huns in many respects, combined with their simplicity. They possess the greatest part of the farther bank of the Danube."

The Byzantine emperors tacitly countenanced the occupation by the Servians of the country to which they gave their name. For some centuries they remained quietly settled within its boundaries, under the government of various chiefs or *kral*s. These at times afforded to Constantinople the important succour of their warlike nation, when the attacks of the Bulgarians and other tribes on the Eastern frontier menaced, in the tenth century, the very existence of the decaying empire.

During this period the Servians, who had been early converted to Christianity, acquired, through their relations with the Byzantine Greeks, a considerable degree of civilisation, whilst their native vigour and aptitude for war remained unimpaired.

The national power was greatly increased when, towards the twelfth century, the supremacy of one chief, under certain limitations, was established. A succession of enterprising kings then gradually extended Servian power far beyond its early limits—the same, or nearly so, as those which at present distinguish it on the map. Encroachments on the Byzantine Empire, and the conquest or absorption of adjacent Slavonian populations, contributed to build up so powerful a state that, in the fourteenth century, the sovereignty of its monarchs stretched from the Adriatic

to the Black Sea. Stephan Doushan (1336—1356) could style himself emperor (Czar) of Servia, King of the Greeks, Bulgarians and Albanians, and Autocrat of various Illyrian provinces lying on the Adriatic.

His banners bore an imperial double eagle, and it is said that he seriously aspired to subvert the remnant of the Byzantine Empire (restricted now to Greece, with parts of the modern Roumelia surrounding the capital) and instal himself at Constantinople. One day, on the occasion of a great festival—that in honour of the Archangel Michael—tradition represents him as addressing to his people the exultant question, "Whither shall I lead you to victory? Towards Greece, or across the Danube?" "Wherever you lead us, we will follow, glorious Czar!" was the reply.

The reign of Doushan forms the brightest epoch of ancient Servian history. The earliest written records of the country were composed either in his days, or during the reign of his predecessor. King Doushan himself, it is certain, gave to his people a code of laws. These have been characterised as bearing a purer stamp of the primitive Slavonian bent of mind than the laws of other nations of the same race, and are distinguished especially by their spirit of moderation.

Belgrade, the chief city of Servia—the Belgrade of modern times, that is to say, for a city, afterwards destroyed, existed at that spot under the Roman Empire—dates its origin from the reign of Doushan.

The entry of the Turks into Europe, under Orkhan, not only checked the development of the empire so great under Doushan, but, after a struggle of some thirty years, resulted in the extinction of the ancient kingdom of Servia.

Sixty-four years before that memorable day, when Mohammed the Second rode in triumph into Constantinople, the Servian power, after a fierce conflict, had succumbed.

On the plain of Cassova, in the southern corner of his sovereignty, King Lazarus of Servia, at the head of a large army drawn from his proper domains, from Bosnia, Dalmatia, Bulgaria, and Hungary, encountered (1389) Sultan Amurath the First, leading a Turkish host, less strong numerically than that of the Christians, but composed of veteran warriors, flushed with previous victories in Asia

and in Europe. The fight was long and terrible. At first the Servians gained ground; but after a time Amurath's son, the famous Bajazet, surnamed for his impetuous valour Ilderim ("Lightning"), succeeded in breaking the Christian ranks. Armed with an iron club, Bajazet himself led on his men, dreadful havoc marking his path on either side. Before the day closed the Turks were everywhere victorious.

The battle ended with a *régat* tragedy which has since been the ever-recurring theme of national song and lament, and has also supplied the subject of a drama by a modern Servian writer, Milutinowicz.*

King Lazarus, after long combat, being finally made prisoner, was brought, with many noble Servians, before the victorious Turkish sultan. As Amurath received his captives in his tent, one of their number, Milosch Kobilovitch, bowed himself before the throne as if to do reverence; then, suddenly drawing out a dagger which he had concealed beneath his clothes, he stabbed the conqueror to the heart. Two other Servian chiefs, Milan Tepliza and Ivan Kossantschitz, seconded him in this deed of patriotic desperation. The dying Sultan Amurath ordered with his last breath, not only his assassins, but his defeated opponent Lazarus, to be put to death; a sentence which was instantly carried out. So perished the last Servian king, and with him, for over four centuries, the independence of Servia.†

Servia fell, but not ingloriously; for the Turk, it must be remembered was then at the height of his youthful strength, sanguinary fury, and fanaticism; was, in fact, a "quasi-infernal roaring lion of a Turk," as Mr. Carlyle has phrased it, contrasting the Osmanli of that time with the "Caput Mortuum and torpid nuisance" which the sage of Chelsea pronounces him to be now.

* Translations of various national songs were made in 1827 by Sir John Bowring; and one of the best of those on the battle of Cassova is included in the *Serbski Pesme* (Songs of Servia) of Owen Meredith (the present Lord Lytton).

† "The mummy of the canonised King Lazar is to be seen to this day," says a traveller who visited Servia some years ago. "I made a pilgrimage to Vrdnik, a monastery in the Frusca Gora, where his mummy is preserved with the most religious care in the church, exposed to the atmosphere. It is, of course, shrunk, shrivelled, and of a dark brown colour, bedecked with an antique embroidered mantle, said to be the same worn at the battle of Kassova. The fingers were covered with the most costly rings, no doubt since added." (Paton's *Servia*, London, 1845, p. 227.)

All the South Slavonic communities were then involved in disaster. Theirs the ill-fortune to lie, in Eastern Europe, nearest to the Mahometan deluge. It is no disgrace to them that they went down before the mighty storm which passed on to Poland and Hungary, and which, under Solyman the Magnificent (1529), raged round the walls of Vienna itself.

From the epoch of the Turkish conquest, the annals of Servia present only the dry and barren tale of a nation—spirited, but far outmatched—in a state of vassalage to a powerful empire of alien race and religion. Desultory warfare was long waged against the conquerors by isolated bands of Servians. When hard pressed, they could take refuge in the forests or mountain fastnesses; but during four hundred years of Turkish domination, Belgrade and its surrounding country was the only portion of Servian soil over which, at times, the standard of the Crescent was not paramount. The frontier city opposed a desperate resistance to Sultan Solyman in 1522; but, subdued at last, it rested in Turkish possession down to 1688, when the Austrians, under the Elector of Bavaria, succeeded, after a long siege, in taking it by storm.

This capture of Belgrade made great stir at the time throughout Europe. It was thought that great results would follow for Christendom. In an old tract, *True Relation of the Siege of Belgrade* (London, 1688), occurs the following doggerel verse, anticipating the complete expulsion of the Turks. Even then, it would appear, "the sick man" was thought to be dying!

Three Bs, of which two are already won,
Will crown the glory of the work begun.
Buda, Belgrade, Byzantium once obtained,
The rest will be but sport and quickly gained.

The success of the Austrians was but transient, however. Two years later the Turks succeeded in recapturing the place.

The vicissitudes of conflict between the German and Turkish empires caused Belgrade, after this, frequently to change hands from Turk to Christian, and vice versa. In 1693 the Austrians invested it, but the Mussulmans made good their defence. In 1717, however, the famous Prince Eugène—joint-victor with Marlborough over the French—led the forces of the Empire to the siege of Belgrade. After one of the most arduous campaigns he ever undertook, Eugène, by a bold

stroke, succeeded in destroying almost the whole of the Turkish army opposing him, and triumphantly entered the city. A considerable portion of Servian territory was brought temporarily under the sway of the Kaiser. A noble German song has celebrated how "Prinz Eugen der edle Ritter" won the great stronghold from the hands of the Mussulmans.

Twenty-two years afterwards the Austrians, unsuccessful in a fresh frontier war, were obliged to relinquish, by treaty, their Servian acquisitions. In 1789 Marshal Loudon captured Belgrade for the emperor, but Austrian weakness again compelled its restitution in 1791. So much for the fortunes of Servia's chief city. Let us now glance at the condition of the people during their long captivity.

The lot of the Servians, during the early period of Turkish rule, was not so intolerable, in a material point of view, as it eventually became. The early sultans, despotic and severe when angered by disobedience or revolt, were yet politic statesmen and good administrators. Unlike their degenerate descendants of the eighteenth century, they themselves held diligent watch over the conduct of the provincial pashas towards the people. Though the Christians were made to feel their social inferiority—were forbidden to carry arms or to enter a town on horseback, and were subjected to many other indignities—they were permitted the undisturbed exercise of their religion, and were, on the whole, neither excessively taxed, or violently treated, by the dominant race. But this state of things gradually faded away, to be succeeded by intolerable oppression in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when sultans of feeble personality—the Ahmeds and the Mustafas—filled the throne of the Solymans and Amuraths.

In proportion as the central power at Constantinople became relaxed, the pashas of the distant provinces disregarded the laws of the empire, and taxed and plundered the Christian population for their own enrichment. The Spahis, or Turkish feudatories, displayed the most overbearing pride; freely indulged in acts of rapine and violence; and often forcibly carried off the wives and daughters of the peasants, to replenish the harems of Turks of high rank. "The fear the poor Christians live in in these parts," says an old traveller, who passed through Servia—

a rare journey in those days—at the end of the seventeenth century, "cannot but move us greatly to compassion; we saw them retreat to the woods at the first sight of us, to avoid us, which made us many times ride after them, to undeceive them." (Dr. Edward Browne's Travels, &c.)

Turkish misrule reached its height towards the close of the last century, and, as its natural accompaniment, the elements of revolt were seething among the Christian "rayahs." The remembrance of ancient freedom was still preserved by the national songs; the wrongs of Servia were bewailed, and revenge longed for in every home. A significant custom, which, it is said, still prevails, illustrates the depth of the hatred borne by the Servians to their oppressors.

Whenever, at the close of a feast, it was time for the bowl to circulate, bottles of a native wine, to which had of old been given the repulsive name of "Turk's Blood," were produced. The first person who tasted it would then ask, with affected surprise, "What is this?" To which, some one replying, "It is Turk's Blood," the first speaker, pouring out again, would solemnly rejoice, "Then let it flow freely!"

The forests and mountain defiles, in these times, were filled with "heyducs"—patriot bandits—who counted it glory to waylay, pillage, and kill, by fair means or foul, the tormentors of their country. Upon the deeds of these men the mass of the population looked with scarce-disguised approval. "By robbery was it gotten; by robbery it is torn from them," muttered the rayahs, as they heard some fresh tale of property reft from Turkish travellers by the "heyducs."

The young wife of a noted Servian chief (Veliko) exclaimed, on seeing her husband assume his "heyduc's" dress and accoutrements:

"Woe is me! I have married a robber!"

"Console yourself," he replied, "every man is now a robber!"

Thus, for many years in the latter half of the last century, the Servians were ripening for insurrection and independence; leaders fit to commence and to carry out such a movement only were wanting. Those leaders at length, in succession, appeared—Czerni George and Milosch Obrenovitsch.

George Petrovitsch—Czerni George, of

the Servians; Kara George, of the Turks (both names signifying "Black George")—may, perhaps, be called the Wallace of Servia. Milosch Obrenovitsch, who came after him, may stand, though with less exact parallel, for its Bruce.

Kara George, dim Slavonic hero of these our days, well deserved his sobriquet of "black," as to the origin of which writers on Servia have needlessly puzzled themselves; but which is surely sufficiently accounted for by the man's dark, passionate hardihood. His character presents a combination of heroism, blended with ferocity, which is full of antique grandeur.

Here is a striking incident in the early career of Kara George, who, born about 1770, became in 1804 the awakener and the leader of Servian regeneration.

A "heyduc" in his youth, according to tradition, he, however, considered himself safe in settling down, in primitive rusticity, as grazier and pig-dealer. But either official remembrance of his old offences, or, perhaps, his inability to restrain himself from fresh ones, brought upon him, presently, the evil regard of the Turkish authorities of the district. Conscions that clouds were gathering over him, George resolved on flight. Rousing his aged father, he collected his cattle and household goods, and set forth for Austria.

It would appear that the old man was not aware, at first, whither George was leading him. Deep was his anguish on perceiving that his son's design consisted in their taking refuge in a foreign land. The idea of leaving his beloved Servia, probably for ever, was unbearable to him; and, when they arrived in sight of the River Save, which forms the boundary between Servia and Austria, the old man, forgetting whatever dangers menaced them, with senile dejection implored George to turn back.

"Do not go to Germany, my son," he said. "Let us return. Let us humble ourselves, and we shall obtain pardon. Do not go."

George remained inexorable.

At last the father murmured, "Cross the river, then, alone. I remain in this country."

"How then!" cried Black George, an ebullition of frenzy seizing him; "shall I live to see thee slowly tortured to death by the Turks? It is better that I should kill thee myself at once!"

So saying, he grasped his pistol, and actually shot his father dead on the spot!

As he passed through the next village, this extraordinary man said to the people: "Go, get the old man, who lies yonder, buried for me; and drink, also, for his soul at a funeral feast!" For that purpose he made them a present of the cattle which he had with him, and then crossed the Save.

Returning after some time, when a different pasha ruled in Servia, George took up again his occupation of herdsman and grazier. Stern and taciturn in manner, he nourished secretly his feelings of hatred to the Turks, and longings for the redemption of his country. At this time (1800—1804) no thought of attaining supreme command in an insurrection, still less of rising to be Prince of Servia, had crossed his mind. When, availing themselves of Turkish troubles—Pasha Passwan Oglu's revolt—in the neighbouring province of Bulgaria, the Servians came to a general resolve to stand up in arms for independence, George, who, after a brief deliberation, was acclaimed as generalissimo, at first wished to decline undertaking the responsibilities of leadership. As a final remonstrance, he told the assembled chiefs and elders, frankly, that he feared the inborn violence of his nature unfitted him for supreme command.

"I am of hot temper," he said; "shall want my own way; and know not what acts of passion I may commit when thwarted."

"So much the better," answered the assembly, with hardly a dissentient voice. "It is such a man we would have in these times. Lead us against the Turks, Kara George!"

In the midst of forces largely composed of men of heroic physical build, the attributes of great personal strength and valour conspicuously marked out Kara George. Of lofty stature, spare, broad-shouldered, with black deep-sunken eyes, no one could fail to recognise him in battle; and his mere presence often sufficed to create a panic among the Turks. He preferred fighting on foot, and when engaged with the enemy, always sprang from his horse if he saw a chance of a personal encounter. Though totally uneducated, not knowing how to read or write, he had yet considerable capacity, natural and acquired, for generalship. It is said that he soon became accustomed to dictating despatches

with fluency and elegance. The general love of the Servians for poetry and declamation may account for this.

To restore the authority of the sultan, two considerable Turkish armies entered Serbia early in the year 1806, one from Bosnia, under Abu-Beker Pasha, and the other from Nissa, in Roumelia, under Ibrahim, Pasha of Scutari. The total of the forces Kara George had at his disposal did not exceed ten thousand, but they were determined men, and Kara George knew well the capabilities of his country for defence. His knowledge of the mountain defiles and the intricacies of the forests served him well. For some months he baffled both armies, and in August, 1806, falling upon the Pasha of Bosnia, he succeeded in driving him back across the Drina with great loss. The Pasha of Scutari found himself unable to cope with George, and in the year 1807 the Servians rejoiced in the entire deliverance of their country from the Turks, the citadel as well as the city of Belgrade being at length wrested from Ottoman hold. A species of military government was now established by the Voyvodes, or chief proprietors of Serbia, most of whom had under their command a body of cavalry formed of their friends and tenants. The Voyvodes assembled once a year at Belgrade, under the presidency of Kara George, to deliberate upon affairs of state, whilst a senate of twelve members, one for each district of Serbia, was appointed as the permanent executive. George, into whose disposition more ambitious principles had entered than of old, soon found himself troubled by the dissensions and jealousies of the Voyvodes. The latter desired to court a close alliance with Russia, to which policy George, perhaps over-estimating the new-born power of Serbia, was not very well inclined. However, in 1809, when Russia was at war with the Porte, he undertook the invasion of Bosnia and the Herzegovina. Crossing the mountains near Simiza, with the object of opening up communications with Montenegro, he at first drove the Turkish forces before him, and laid siege to Novibazar. In this he was unsuccessful, and the south of Serbia being menaced by other Turkish forces, he was obliged to return there. The year 1810 was a fortunate one for George, who had meanwhile been induced to embrace the alliance with Russia. With some assistance from them the Servians inflicted a severe defeat

on Kurschid Pasha, who had advanced from Nissa at the head of large forces; and not long afterwards George routed another army from Bosnia, and drove it back across the Drina. George availed himself of the éclat of these successes to obtain in 1811 increased personal power in the government, and it seemed that his position was firmly established. It was, however, his last period of triumph.

Whilst governing Serbia with almost despotic sway, Kara George retained in his habits many traits of the primitive condition of his early days. The ruler of Serbia might sometimes be seen to clear with his own hands a piece of forest land, cut a water-course for a mill, or even put his hand to the plough. He spoiled the insignia of the Russian order, with which he had been decorated, while in the act of fixing a hoop on a cask!

The Russian alliance, to which George had at first been averse, contributed to his downfall. Trusting too much that, in the negotiations for peace with Turkey, Russia would thoroughly protect Servian interests, Kara George did not bethink him of treating warily with the Turks for his own advantage, as his successor the politic Milosch Obrenovitsch would have treated. Moreover, he foolishly neglected, as it would seem, to preserve the Servian fighting power in due discipline and readiness.

These two weaknesses cost him dearly. In 1812 Russia, forewarned of a struggle which might involve her very existence—Napoleon's invasion—made haste to conclude peace with the Porte, and in the treaty signed at Bucharest, only a few stipulations, and those of quite an illusory nature, were inserted on behalf of Serbia. The next year, the Porte having its hands free, two formidable Turkish armies advanced to effect the reconquest of the former vassal state. The attack was so sudden, and the Servian preparations so deficient, that the Turks speedily carried everything before them. Kara George seemed paralysed; and, dreading Turkish vengeance, without striking a blow he crossed the Danube with his treasures into Austria, on the third of October, 1813.

Thus terminated, somewhat ignobly, the rule of Kara George over the land he had liberated. His life was to have a more tragic ending, as we shall shortly see. But first let us give a glance at the man who was to replace George—a per-

sonage no less extraordinary, but of character quite dissimilar—Milosch Obrenovitch, to whose exertions, in which craft, audacity, and patriotism were strangely mingled, Servia owes it that she gradually regained her independence, and passed from a period of despair into one of solid prosperity.

THE LAST WISH.

THIS is all, is it much, my darling? You must follow your path in life,
Have a head for its complex windings, a hand for its sudden strife;
The sun will shine, the flowers will bloom, though my course 'mid them all is o'er,
I would not that those dear living eyes should light in their joy no more;
Only just for the sake of the happy past, and the golden days that have been,
By the love we have loved, and the hopes we have hoped, will you have my grave kept green?
Just a moment in the morning, in the eager flush of the day,
To pluck some creeping weed perchance, or train the white rose spray;
Just a moment to shade my violets from the glare of the noontide heat,
Just a tear and a prayer in the gloaming, ere you leave me with lingering feet.
Ah! it is weak and foolish, but I think that in God's serene,
I shall know, and love to know, mine own, that you keep my grave so green.
I would fain, when the drops are plashing against your window-pane,
That you should be thinking wistfully of my grasses out in the rain;
That when the winter veil is spread o'er the fair white world below,
Your tender hands twine the holly wreaths that mark my rest in the snow.
My clasp on life and life's rich gifts grows faint and cold I ween,
Yet oh! I would hold it to the last—the trust of my grave kept green.
Because it is by such little signs the heart and its faith are read;
Because the natural man must shrink ere he joins the forgotten dead;
The Heavenly hope is bright and pure, and calm is the Heavenly rest,
Yet the human love clings yearningly to all it has prized the best.
We have been so happy, darling, and the parting pang is keen,
Ah! soothe it by this last vow to me—you will watch that my grave keeps green?

THE FASHIONS OF THE FUTURE.

It is often remarked that lawyers, doctors, and divines see a great deal more of the worst side of mankind than other folks, and that their view of the world must necessarily be gloomy. Ailments mental and physical come under their notice all day, and every day. Our sorrows, our weaknesses, our follies, our infirmities, and our—well, our lawyer is bound to know how close we sail to the wind at

times. If no man can be a hero to his valet-de-chambre, how can he keep up an heroic appearance to his doctor, who cares nothing about the behaviour of his client at the battle of Dustynullah, looking upon him only as the envelope or habitation of a most interesting case of nutmeg liver? But if lawyers and doctors, divines and valets-de-chambre see mankind from an unheroic point of view, what opinion of it can be held by the great army of artificers who minister to its outward adornment? To the rank and file of mankind, Hyde Park, a military review, or one of Her Majesty's drawing-rooms, affords a spectacle of beauty and symmetry calculated to produce ambition if not envy; but how do these things affect those who contribute the trappings of splendour? What does that eminent artist Mr. Roquelatre, when he takes his "constitutional" in the Park, think of the massive broad shoulders of his American client General Hezekiah Hardpan, and what passes in his mind as he walks down St. James's-street on a drawing-room day, and notes the fine broad chest of Cornet Plantagenet Plunger? While less well-instructed persons of the male sex gaze in admiration on the beautiful outline of Lady Diana Pranceleigh, as she canters up Rotten Row on her superb chestnut, what is the private opinion of Mr. Paddington, the famous riding-habit maker; and what does Madame La Mode think of the charming female figures at the court balls, at which she occupies a snug corner in the gallery? These excellent people are behind the scenes. They know all the weak points of the leaders of fashion. They can tell you exactly why a style, which is followed by "the ruck" in the wild-goose flight of fashion, was introduced to bring out a good point or to tone down a defect in the anatomy of a royal, exalted, or serenely transparent personage. They can inform you why towering "window shutter" shirt-collars were introduced to hide an ugly scar in the neck of one, and the low "turned down" style brought in to suit the bull-neck of another. They can explain in an instant why crinoline was made the fashion by one great lady, and why the graceful "ruff" was brought to the fore by another. This is a terrible knowledge, and should weigh down the possessor with a sense of responsibility.

Revolving these things in my mind, and greatly awed by the considerations suggested by them, I determined to seek

an interview with Madame La Mode. I had heard much of Madame, and had seen many of her creations. I knew that the great—the very great—ladies were attired by her, and that she was the prime authority, not on the fashions one sees in every window and in every newspaper, but on what is “going to be” worn, the shapes and styles which have hardly yet assumed form and life, and may be revealed to the million in the course of six, twelve, or maybe eighteen months. I was aware that the ordinary position of a mere customer would avail me little. Unless introduced by the wearer of a coronet, I should hardly be admitted to the presence of Madame at all, and should even then be compelled to mind my own business, and refrain from asking questions. How I obtained an introduction and a conference is a secret of my own which I intend to keep.

If I were an imaginative person, I should now proceed to depict in glowing language the magnificence of the boudoir into which I was introduced, and the gorgeous costume in which the arbitress of fashion was attired, but truth compels me to reveal that I was received in a snug private office, handsomely, but simply furnished, and that the dress of Madame La Mode herself, was—albeit of the latest style—quiet and subdued in tone, almost to excess. So sombre was her costume that it afforded no scope for description, the only noticeable features being a superb “cincture” of choice goldsmith’s work, and adorned with many pendants, hanging low over the hips like the belt of a knight in the days of Cressy and Poitiers, and a cravat of rich pillow-lace, tied twice, carelessly, reminding me of the historic Steenkirk, hurriedly donned by the French dandies, while hastening to battle. Madame received me most graciously, but when I stated the object of my visit, warned me against indiscretion.

“I shall have much pleasure in showing you what is doing, and in telling you what is about to be done, but you must promise to keep my name a profound secret, as well as the names of the personages whose costumes I will show you. I need not tell you that if you printed an exact description of the dress to be worn by the Duchess of Daintynshire, and mentioned her Grace’s name, the chances are that she would give the costume to her maid, instead of wearing it herself.”

“Discretion,” I protested, “is a quality

on which I pride myself. The true test of excellence in my profession is the knowledge, not of what to say, but of what not to say.”

“I am delighted to hear it, although it sounds to me as something new; but, frankly, what do you want to know?”

“Briefly, then, the future.”

“The future,” said Madame La Mode, thoughtfully, “is difficult to predict. There are indications from which it may be guessed, but you, of course, understand that until shapes are actually worn, they are uncertain. I have an idea—an inspiration—call it as you please: I realise it, but in the process of realisation it changes from day to day. Outlines and effects which are perfect—while in the mind’s-eye—vary in the process of production, till they almost lose their identity. My object is to produce what is not the published and recognised fashion. I seek the original. When my fashion becomes what is called ‘the rage,’ I have done with it. It is then nearly, if not quite, vulgar, and I turn aside to something entirely different. Not so pretty, perhaps, not so effective. No matter, so long as it is not what is generally worn. I will give you an instance of this. Jet trimmings have been ‘the rage,’ but I use no jet now, and have replaced it by heavy gold and silver braid—not in fancy patterns, but in perpendicular lines—to assist in producing the effect I now seek for.”

“What,” I asked, breathlessly, “may that effect be?”

“Slenderness; call it thinness and flatness, if you will. The reign of the Sylph has returned, but crinoline dies very hard. It is long since the female outline resembled that of a pen-wiper, spreading out towards the base; but crinoline has clung to the figure with extraordinary tenacity. You will recollect that, a short time ago, when waists were worn as short as they are now extravagantly long, they were very short in front, giving a curious expression to the figure. This was enhanced by artificial means, and the style, such as it was, lasted for a while. Again, as the front and sides of the dress became flatter, it was puffed out behind to a great extent. Puffs and bows abounded at the back; in fact, the entire dress seemed dragged away to make the puffs and train. This is to be abolished.”

“You astonish me! Is the figure to be flat all over?”

“The flatter the better. There is no

longer to be any crinoline at all. The figure is to be shown as it is."

"I am delighted. The Veracities are at last receiving due honour. But is there to be nothing? No crinoline at all, no—ahem—'improvers' of any kind?"

"Nothing," answered Madame. "You speak of 'improvers.' The only way to improve the figure now is by diet and constant exercise. It must be straight—straight and flat; everything must be brought down to produce the perfect sylph—not angular—if possible; but even angularity would be preferable to robustness."

"Good heavens! But how is this to be done?"

"By using the self-denial of men in training. You gentlemen are very unobservant not to have noticed that ladies, just now, miss no opportunity of taking severe exercise. Do you, in your innocence, suppose that walking with the guns, skating in hot weather, and the rest of it, is done for the fun of the thing? Not at all. Women have an instinct of approaching fashions, and know they must get down their figures for the next season."

"But cannot this be done without working themselves to death and destroying their good looks?"

"They are sure to look well if they are in the fashion. And you see that I cannot help them very much. It is easy to add, but difficult to take away. A few years ago, anybody who was not deformed could be made to look well; but now——"

"Cannot the artist do much to reduce size, or, at least, produce the appearance of thinness?"

"Something, of course. This will be effected by making the dress fit closely until almost on the ground. It will absolutely cling to the figure. The 'cuirass' idea will prevail: the upper part of the dress will be like a corset, and the long waist would be impossible with 'improvers' of any kind."

"Am I then to suppose that we are coming back to the style of the French Directory? Are we to have Coan robes—the diaphanous toilettes worn by the 'Merveilleuses'? Are our wives and sisters about to make themselves as much like Madame Récamier, or Madame Tallien, or Josephine Beauharnais, as possible? Will they come to scanty muslins—damped to make them cling to the figure? Do they want to look like Canova's dancing-girl, for instance?"

"Hardly. You see old fashions are revived, but with an alteration. No ancient style is ever resuscitated in its integrity; the character may be preserved, but with many modifications of detail. In the dresses worn under the first French Republic, the Directory, and the Empire, the tightly-fitting robe tapered downwards towards the feet, and seemed to embrace the ankles. It did not reach the ground. The new style will be much longer, and will have a train."

"This is an important innovation."

"You see there must be a difference. The lower part of the dress will shortly resemble a column with a base springing out at the hinder side—not gradually from the waist, as you see on everybody now, but suddenly, sharply—a train which will twist about the feet of the unskilful, and prove a snare to the unwary."

"This effect might be produced by the Greek style, as it was called, with the short waist and perpendicular skirt one sees in old portraits; but how is it to be combined with the long-waisted 'cuirass'?"

"It will be produced. When a fashion is wanted, the artist will find a way to supply it."

"Pending this revolution, what is being worn?"

"Everything which fits closely, which depicts the figure exactly—which reveals Nature as she really is."

"I am glad to hear it. What colours do you find the best for expressing this new idea?"

"Soft colours—not the washed-out, faded shades which were recently worn, but rich, soft colours which express the outline without accenting it. For instance, prune colour, dark, deep, and rich; scabious—a deep vinous purple; sultan—a variety of Turkey red; and Indian red, a colour well known to artists. Nile-water, moonlit gray, washy blues, greens, and pinks are things of the past. Those pale colours were trying things to the complexion, and required much art to carry them off. So far as colour is concerned, we are in a better period. The new theory of effect is the contrast, not of colour, but of material. Instead of putting together various colours or shades of the same colour, we produce our costume from a single colour, represented in various surfaces. As in architecture you take the red of brick, the red of Dumfries stone, and the red of terra cotta to pro-

duce an effect, so do we put together velvet, silk, and satin of precisely the same hue, getting our effect out of the contrast of material. Difference of texture gives us all the 'character' we want."

"So much for dresses. But for wraps—as I must perforce irreverently call them?"

"There, indeed, is much scope for imagination. But while these are being brought in, let me show you a costume for a peeress."

It was gray, of a light shade in some material made of the wool of the Cashmere goat, or of the vicuña of the Andes; exquisitely soft to the touch. The—well the lower department was trimmed with braid; the "polonaise" was garnished with the gray fur of Astrakhan; the cuffs and "cuirass" were of that fur entirely. The colour was uniform throughout—a delicate gray—but the style was produced by the simple difference of texture, braid, fur, and cloth, displaying each other's beauty. There was also a costume of rich black silk, with what I am told are called "illusion" sleeves of thinner stuff, gorgeously trimmed with perpendicular rows of gold French braid—a splendid affair. There were, moreover, divers dresses of that beautiful shade called "treble cream," delicious in its golden softness. As these visions passed before me, I became dazzled with ideas of form and colour, and demanded, in my mildest manner—mantles.

"Of mantles," said Madame, "we have variety enough. There is the long coat of soft brown material, with a hood, if not useful, still ornamental and stylish. There is the long silk mantle, lined or not lined with fur, and covered with rich fringe. You will observe that these are curiously formed in the sleeve. In this, the latest idea, you will see that the sleeve is double. There is a practicable sleeve, and another supplementary sleeve, which hangs down flatly, and simply gives style to the garments. Look at that specimen in light gray. It is trimmed with the feathers of the Russian diver. To make a mantle and muff, seventy or eighty birds must die."

"Unlucky diver," I thought, but kept my reflections to myself.

"You will also remark," said Madame, "that the majority of these mantles are trimmed either with feathers or fur, and that the fur does not lie flatly, but porcupine fashion. That mantle you are now looking at is trimmed with the feathers of a choice bird. Do you know what it is?"

With some difficulty I recognised an old friend, the Argus pheasant, but strangely translated.

"The feathers," continued Madame, "are reversed. In the bird they overlap and form a sort of coat of mail—useful to the bird, perhaps, but of no service to us. To suit the fashion, each individual feather has been set up against the grain, so that the fabric resembles a piece of shell-work, and conveys a ruff-like impression."

"I observe. But why this rage for bristly effects?"

"I must once more tell you that fashion does not proceed by sudden jerks. To the uninitiated this may appear to be the case, but to us, who are better informed, it is easy to trace every idea from its initiation to its elaboration. From the ruff—an excellent style for a long-necked, sloping-shouldered model—we have gradually advanced to the ruff of fur, pretty and comfortable. Our best mantles express this idea. The fur trimming of sable, black or silver fox, is continued around the neck in ruff-like fashion, and has just now developed into a new form."

"Indeed! And what form?"

"Look. In this model you will see the fur trimming simply running round the neck; in that you behold the fur collar, so to speak, loosened from the neck, and shaping itself into a boa."

"Like Hercules, I knew the boa in my cradle. But, do you tell me that the ancient boa, which encircled the scraggy necks of my maiden aunts, who have forgotten to die and leave me their money, is to be worn again?"

"Undoubtedly. Some day the shawl will come in again. As for the boa, nothing admits of more style in wearing it. Look at that boa of black fox. It is costly, I admit; but look at its facility in expressing the character of the wearer. It may be simply elegant, tied thus; or attractive, in this way; or stern and repellent, thus. The boa is plastic. The wearer may convey whatever impression she pleases."

"This, indeed, is a revelation. But what is that garment with 'chic' in every fold?"

"Oh! that is hardly quite novel. We have made, at least, half-a-dozen of them. It is a lady's box-coat."

A box-coat it was, sure enough. Shade of Tom, Jerry, and Logic, it was a Corinthian upper Benjamin!

"Observe the minuteness of every

detail," said Madame; "note the expression of the long-waisted back. Mark the sporting cut of the sleeves. Count the triple cape, which gives character to the whole! You may recollect the period of Waterford?"

"Pardon me, Madame; I am wicked, perhaps, but not old."

"This is the gentleman's box-coat of those days. What can be more charming, on the top of a drag, on a showery spring day?"

"I am amazed. We live in a great period. We are to have the age of the Merveilleuses, of the Dandies, of the Bucks, and the Bloods, brought before us. Can we not invent anything new for ourselves?"

"There is no such thing as original invention. You may modify, you may select, you may adapt, you may apply, but you cannot invent. The adhesive style is but a revival of the fashion of the Directory and the First Empire, and this was a fancied imitation of the Greek and Roman dress. The sandal shoes were but part of this revival of the antique. As we had our Grecian bend a few years ago, so had our grandmothers the Grecian lounge. Hoop skirts were done to death by Margaret of Valois. You cannot invent anything new in houses. You imitate the Venetian Gothic—as I catch an idea from a picture by Titian—you copy the Queen Anne architecture as I put on a lace cravat; you shriek about the 'antique,' as I put you into classic costumes; you fancy you make new furniture and new pottery, while you imitate the Moorish, the Hispano-Moresque, the Chinese, and the Japanese styles. You take your plays and your books from the—but you know this better than I can tell you. Show me anything original in any other walk of art, and I will match it by an invention of my own."

But by this time I was not disposed to dispute anything that Madame might choose to assert, and I went meekly on my way, feeling once more the truth that there is "nothing new under the sun."

HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVES.

NATURALLY, we ourselves are that part of the world about whom exists every information. Light falls upon us plentifully. But for what purpose does the other half rise? At what time does the other half set? How much money does the other half put into its pocket, for the work it

does between its uprising and its lying down, daily? It is a blank. To supply which a peep into an underlying layer of the London world has been made, the results of which shall be hereby given.

Plenty of men, it has been discovered, for so many shillings per week, and for so many hours per day, perform mysteries. Of these mysteries no elucidation can be, no elucidation shall be, attempted. These men are by trade chill fitters, wet hacklers, skivers and pasters, springers and timers, removers, nailers-out, tuck-pointers. Plenty of other men grow and feed, and sleep and wake, to be roughers, Forrell workers, colour-cakers, fret-cutters, cutters and scorers, moulding-stickers, wirers and tyers, blockers, pullers, pickers, and driers and fillers; the last turning out to be something in the tobacco-trade, in which, also, there are men spending their lives as hands for the pan. Descending a little from these regions of bewilderment on to commoner but still curious ground, we find men fixed in the one calling of stopperers; of setters-on; of stoners; of brush-borers (boring holes into brush-backs to receive the bristles); of mop-makers; of military bushy hands; and of lustre mounters; while others get their living as dippers, soda-water bottlers, banjo makers, fancy soap stampers, pianoforte-key cutters (a perfectly distinct trade being pianoforte-key finishers), wire-bust makers, court-plaster makers, deformity instrument makers (preference being given to such leading hands as can forge their own work), packers, unpackers, and, more mysteriously still, there are men accustomed to use spokeshave and planes.

Proceeding, we find men advertised for, who are well up in frying fish and peeling potatoes; who are accustomed to mind baked-potato cans; who are pie makers, used to the pie and eel; who are comfit-makers, used to steam-pans; who are accustomed to open oysters; who are vegetable cooks. Accompanying these are men used to corks; who can get up clubs; who have a thorough knowledge of dressing; who are dollymen, or experienced in washing by hand-punch; who can push the sale of hand-made Glasgow biscuits, or have no objection to pushing that readier article of propulsion—a truck; who can rub down and flat; who are used to the round knife, or to the ground-off saw; who can do a round; who can stuff well; who are milkers; feeders; used to boiling-room; to carcase-work; to hammer and shovel;

and who can kill. Some men, be it known further, are clickers; some are webbers; some are rough-stuff cutters; some are lasters; some are paste fitters; children's pump men; flowerers; military heelers; leather-strap binders; stabbers, and finishers. Some are sew-round hands; some are operators on sole-sewers; some are needle and thread hands; some, again, are cleaners-up. Each member of this last group belongs to the boot and shoe trade; the divisions being further sectioned off, in a byway sort of manner, into finishers on women's; finishers on light women's; finishers on children's; finishers on light children's; and—a little more bravely—finishers on men's. Remarking upon the said divisions and sub-divisions, it must be said that they are undoubtedly very odd. Turning the inquiry, for the present, on this one pivot only, is the term boot-maker a delusion? Can one man no more make a pair of boots, than another can make the symbolic pin? It would appear so. Boots have—nay, a solitary boot has—to be clicked, to be rough-cut, to be lasted, to be riveted, to be webbed, to be paste-fitted, flowered, military-heeled, sewn round, bound at the strap, stabbed, finished, cleaned-up, to say nothing of chosen, tried on, fitted, sold; and a small battalion of men would be required for it. No blame to the British workman for quailing, single-handed, from the undertaking, and rejecting it!

Other mysteries are brought to light when another step is taken. In the tin-trade there are bright hands, and general hands, and common hands, and jobbing hands; there are fish-kettle makers, tea-kettle makers, large size water-pot makers, slop-pail makers; there are box hands, case hands, bowl hands, colander hands; men for zinc work accustomed to machines; there are men for every branch imagination can supply, and men keeping as sedulously to their branch as if it would be slaughter to go an inch beyond. Among tailors, there are basters, pressers, cutters, coat hands, good coat hands, best coat hands, plain coat hands, frock-coat hands, trousers hands, vest hands, jobbing hands, finishers after machines. The same man who basted, couldn't finish; the man who finished, wouldn't be demeaned by (or entrusted with, whichever way it goes) the first stitch. It is the refinement of trade economy, miles beyond the boundary conceived by Adam Smith; and it accounts for the cheapness, and real or apparent ex-

cellence, of modern manufacture. Whether it produces excellence in the modern man is a question. A man might find it very pleasing to stamp fancy soap, for example; but when the man has to keep on stamping fancy soap for a week, for a month, for a year, and has never to melt it, never to scent it, never to cake it, never to pack it (all these being the department or the "line" of another), the occupation must become somewhat wearying. When a man, too, for another example, has become used to a dog-stamping machine, with light hammer (as men do), he may think the use delightful, and get much honour from the observance; but, surely, there will come a time when to stamp dogs, albeit with a light hammer, will grow cramping to the intellect. At any rate, excuses could be made then if an unhappy stamper discovered all at once that his life was a mistake. If he looked regretfully, let it be put, at the announcements of "Businesses for Disposal;" wishing he had made himself owner of such one of these as had been found within his means. Might he not have taken, as people of his degree do take, a shop in the sweets and general line, going for a few pounds? Or a wardrobe business, eight pounds, guaranteed more than a living, with no previous knowledge necessary? Then if neither of these hit his fancy, his choice need not have been in the least limited. He could have bought a milk walk, old established; doing six barn-gallons daily, full price; easy round; fifty pounds to pay for all, including a good perambulator. He could have bought a shop for coals, coke, wood, sweets, and general, fifteen pounds the lot; or a coffee-house, with good opening for joints, trade twelve pounds weekly; or a cigar and tobaccoconist's, in a good thoroughfare, surrounded by theatres and carriage manufactories. Turning from these, fastidiously, or with a sigh, there might have been investment in a fish shop, wet, dry, and fried; in another, confined to fried and dried, but with a hopeful opening for wet; in a third, dried and shell; in a fourth, fried, with alamode potatoes; in a fifth, comprehending the whole, and consisting of a snug little shop, in an excellent position, with stabling, four rooms, smoke-hole, side entrance, low rent, and gas laid on. Stewed eels, again, might be thought of. A shop selling these, and doing coffee as well, can be had very cheap; one, for soup also and baked potatoes, would have

only a small sum asked for it, if taken at once; another, going grandly into pie and mashed potatoes (to mash, requiring more science than to bake), would cost as much as sixty pounds, but would take nine pounds over its counter weekly, to quickly tone this large sum down and mitigate it. Then a barber's business might have its attractions. One, including hair-cutting as well as shaving, in a fine position, and old-established, would "do" as much as over two pounds a week. Or there is baking. Such a business, doing ten sacks per week; small goods and bakings; good out-door connection; new barrow; two ovens; all newly done up; could be had, a bargain. A smaller affair, doing seven sacks counter, that should do fifteen (only doesn't), and that is managed by a lady (which may account for it), might change hands for fifty pounds. The same price would give greengrocery, fruit, coals, tobacco, sweets, toys, fine corner premises, nine rooms, large warehouse, stock, fixtures, scales, weights, measures, sacks—everything; with a rent at "the same figure," and forty pounds of it let off. Beer-houses, too (free), in central beer-drinking neighbourhoods, doing genuine trades of thirty shillings daily, might seem enticing; and also shops for cigars and sweets, though they are to be parted with through affliction, and have domestic accommodation limited to one bed-room and a neat back-parlour. As has been put, then, if such businesses as these are looked at by a poor stamper, longingly, need there be wonder or indignation? There would be variety in them, clearly; there would be incident; they would hold times and tides when a man might be pressed, but when, also, he might rest; when he might turn from wheel to periwinkle, from haddock to eel, from frying to baking, from smoke-hole to snug shop, feeling refreshment from the change of which he would never be conscious whilst cutting fret, whilst pointing tuck, whilst skiving, scoring, hacking, whilst being (incessantly) a hand for the pan.

Attention must now be given to that better half of the world's other half—Women. If men's work be cut up, divided, women's work is minced. That is not at all too fine a word for it. In the one entirely new and vast trade of machine-sewing—modern necessity's most recent invention—there is copious proof of it, strong and positive. Young women are wanted, by the scores of scores, to work

on Howe's machines, on Thomas's, on the Bonnaz, or Wilcox and Gibbs's, on Wheeler's, on Singer's, on Clegg's, on Wilson's, on Grover's, on Baker's, on the Excelsior. Being accustomed to one, it is not hoped the women will have brain enough to adapt themselves to another; so the particular "make" is advertised, to prevent waste of material and loss of time. Then when the right women are found for the right machines, the sorting and sifting and sub-division recommence. Some women are only clever at tweed costumes; some only at stuff dresses; some only at white skirts. Other women never travel out of jackets; out of wristbands; out of infants' boots; out of pleated sets; out of boys' plain suits; out of stay-work, bag-work, infants' bibs, and button-holes. Women of one sort are tuckers; women of another sort are tackers; other sorts, again, are toppers, makers up, runners, banders, turners, stitchers, Lancashire trimmers (good hands can earn from twenty-five to thirty-shillings weekly, working eight hours a day), vampers, braiders, embroiderers, beaders, feather-stitchers, quilters, flowerers, adjusters, lisse ruchers, tweed hat stitchers; hands for Oxford shirts, regatta shirts, blue serge shirts; for travelling bags, for ruffles, for waistcoats, skirts, polonaises, mantles, pinafores, bodies and muslin tucks. It seems incredible. Why cannot the same woman tack and tuck, and top and turn, and trim, giving a feather-stitch and a finish, no matter whether the skirt or body be tweed, or silk, or calico? To simply tack a garment, to be for ever simply tacking garments, must give very little opportunity or stimulus to taste and to ability. Think, too, of always vamping, of always running, of always putting on beads, and braid, and band. The women, however, in these cases are (the customary) slaves. Celerity is wanted; goods are wanted, produced at the lowest cost. Let one woman adjust the roomful of machines, therefore; let a second fold for them; let a third tack; let a fourth stitch; let others come in to flower, to quilt, to button-hole, to cord, and finish, and make up: each garment passing from hand to hand, and each woman ready when it is her time. In no other way could prices be what prices are, could garments have their present "cut," and "style," and elegance, and fashion. It is a necessity, to which the modern young woman must bow.

The same obligation exists in making

ties. There are "hands," in this trade, for fronts, for bands, for ends, for knots, for bows; hands for Duke's ends, for Stanleys, for fitting, for sewn lace, for muslin, for bow cards; hands for general work; hands for all parts, who, also, can slip-stitch. In the trade of artificial flowers, some women mount, some prepare, some make bunches, grass, fuchsias, roses, buds, leaves; some are engaged on jet work, crape work, bugle work, small work; and the rose department, again, is divided into women who do the stuck-roses, the silk, and the threaded; to say nothing of those who cut, and who are able to keep stock and to look up orders. Let a hint about feathers follow this about flowers. There are women who scrape feathers; there are women who curl feathers (they get fourteen shillings weekly); there are women who dye feathers, and women who are only allowed to sew. In the frizette trade, there are women who do stems (with the sub-divisions of stems mohair and stems fibre); there are women who do rolls, and hard rolls; who do weaving, plaits, covers, and pin curls. To successfully manufacture bonnets and bonnet-shapes (without entrenching on the art of millinery proper) there are many sub-divisions more. Some women can only apply themselves to willow-sewing (to the best effect); some to chip; some to straw; some to Manilla; some to Paris net; some to paper; some to goffered braid. Some women are split-sewers; some are crown-turners; some are wirers, trimmers, finishers; others are known as blockers, and hands for fancy, for white braid, for coronets, for Dolly Vardens, for block chip, and for tulle. Of ironers, again, there is quite a mosaic of variety. Dyers want ironers of an express sort; dressmakers want girls to press; then follow ironers as commonly understood, branching off into women for such defined articles as skirts, costumes, polonaises, pinafores, baby-linen, new shirts (the pay is one shilling and five pence a dozen for these); for gents' collars, fronts, and cuffs; for ladies' collars, cuffs, and sets; and including women accustomed to the polishing, and those who can take the run of the board.

But it would be wearying to define the divisions of every trade in which women are employed. The subject shall be left, with a little supplement that certainly is of great importance. There is a loud outcry now for work for women. If a note of another cry be listened to, it will be

found to be just as loud for women who will only be so good as to work. Many trades, in this present notice, have been touched upon; domestic service has never even had a hint; the large openings of sick-nursing, of teaching, of selling, of clerkship, of the decoration that nearly reaches fine art, are too well known to need bringing to the light; and yet, the occupations remaining that women are invited to follow are too numerous for the space here available, and their variety is incredible. To give a hint of them—they are lacquering, staining, French-polishing, paper-colouring, japanning, relief-stamping, cameo-stamping, burnishing, cementing, numerical printing, note-paper folding, waste-papersorting, photographic-printing, black-bordering, and the outline-colouring of texts and flowers. To give another hint, women, if they choose, may be military braiders, beaders of lace (the advertisers say it is a remunerative pastime), tassell-workers, fringers, netters, seal-sewers, vellum-sewers, canvas-sewers (those used to tents), carpet-sewers, book-sewers, collaters, folders, crinoline-steelers, pleaters for ball-dresses, for kilts, and holland costumes, rag sorters (at which they can earn twenty-four shillings a week), embroideresses on crape, parasol liners, umbrella-seamers, horsehair-drawers, human-hair-weavers, hair-brush-drawers, muff-stuffers, muff-liners, lace-menders, cutters-up of patterns of dress-materials to send through the post, for which last pretty piece of neatness and method they will obtain a salary of ten shillings a week and a daily tea. There is the business of label-making, again; and labellers wanted in the sauce trade, with a little girl to fill. So far, too, has the barrier between masculine and feminine handicraft been successfully beaten down, that advertisements can be read for young girls accustomed to box. To all these occupations, though, there will, no doubt, be quick and hot objection. It will be said that women must go from home to follow them; that women must sit in work-rooms, that women must have companions this way from whom they would rather recoil. It is true, every clause of it. But a brave woman, having to face life in earnest, would never fear it. If she were a broken-down lady, reduced, with no training, no brain, no glimmer of stoutness and adaptability, the thought of buckling-to in such a manner could never for a moment be entertained. If she were a piece of young gentility—fine, flimsy,

and utterly incapable — she would only want the name of such work as could be done in finery, for the sake of buying more finery, without the chance of her fingers getting soiled. There are men of these classes, as well as women. With either sex, if battle-time comes, these can fight no battle, and simply trail weakly off to that Protestant Purgatorium, the wall. But the majority of English women have the true heroine blood in them. They know how to keep good, even away from the shadow of home; they know how to sit in a workroom and purify the tone of it; they know how to choose their companions, and yet not to insult those they may think it better to reject. If it has happened that many have not yet thought of applying this knowledge, of taking it into the paths and by-paths here indicated, and heroically treading them, it has been most likely because the same do not lie so much upon the surface, and they have never heard of their existence. That thousands of women do get their living in these ways, however, is absolutely certain. That other thousands will be grateful for acquaintance with them, is, possibly, equally true.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE letter to Lord Seely was duly written, and this time in Castalia's own words. Algernon refused to assist her in the composition of it, saying, in answer to her appeals, "No, no, Cassy; I shall make no suggestion whatsoever. I don't choose to expose myself to any more grandiloquence from your uncle about letters being 'written by your hand, but not dictated by your head.' I wonder at my lord talking such high-flown stuff. But pomposity is his master weakness."

Castalia's letter was as follows:

"Whitford, November 23rd.

"DEAR UNCLE VAL,—I am sure you will understand that I was very much surprised and hurt at the tone of your last letter to Ancram. Of course, if you have not the money to help us with, you cannot lend it. And I don't complain of that. But I was vexed at the way you wrote to Ancram. You won't think me ungrateful to you. I know how good you

have always been to me, and I am fonder of you than of anybody in the world except Ancram. But nobody can be unkind to him without hurting me, and I shall always resent any slight to him. But I am writing now to ask you something that 'I wish for very much myself;' it is quite my own desire. I am not at all happy in this place. And I want you to get Ancram a berth somewhere in the Colonies, quite away. It is no use changing from one town in England to another. What we want is to get 'faraway,' and put the seas between us and all the odious people here. I am sure you might get us something if you would try. I assure you Ancram is perfectly wasted in this hole. Any stupid grocer or tallow-chandler could do what he has to do. Do, dear Uncle Val, try to help us in this. Indeed I shall never be happy in Whitford. — Your affectionate niece,
C. ERRINGTON.

"Give my love to Aunt Belinda if she cares to have it. But I daresay she won't.—C. E."

"I think my lord will not doubt the genuineness of that epistle!" thought Algernon, after having read it at his wife's request.

Then the fly was announced, and they set off together to pass the evening at the elder Mrs. Errington's lodgings. The Blue Bell driver touched his hat in a very respectful manner. His master's long-standing account was unpaid, but he continued to receive, for his part, frequent half-crowns from Algernon, who liked the immediate popularity to be purchased by a gift somewhat out of proportion to his means. Indeed, our young friend enjoyed a better reputation amongst menials and underlings than amongst their employers. The former were apt to speak of him as a pleasant gentleman who was free with his money; and to declare that they felt as if they could do anything for young Mr. Errington, so they could! He had such a way with him! Whereas the mere payment of humdrum debts excites no such agreeable glow of feeling, and is altogether a flat proceeding.

"What o'clock shall we say, Castalia?" asked her husband, as they alighted at Mrs. Thimbleby's door.

"Tell him to come at half-past ten," returned Castalia.

It chanced that David Powell was re-entering his lodgings, at the moment the younger Erringtons reached the door. He stood aside to let the lady pass into

the house before him, and thus heard her answer. The sound of her voice made him start, and bend forward to look at her face, when the light from the open door fell upon it. She turned round at the same instant, and the two looked full at each other. David Powell asked Mrs. Thimbleby if that lady were not the wife of Mr. Algernon Errington.

"Yes, Mr. Powell, she is his wife; and more's the pity, if all tales be true!"

"Judge not uncharitably, sister Thimbleby! Nor let your tongue belie the gentleness of your spirit. It is an unruly member that speaks not always out of the fulness of the heart. The lady seems very sick, and bears the traces of much sorrow on her countenance."

"Oh yes, indeed, poor thing! Sickly enough she looks, and sorry. Nay, I dare say she has her own trials, but I fear me she leads that pleasant young husband of hers a poor life of it. I shouldn't say as much to anyone but you, sir, for I do try to keep my tongue from evil-speaking. But had you never seen her before, Mr. Powell?"

Powell answered musingly, "N—no—scarcely seen her. But I had heard her voice."

Mrs. Errington received her son and daughter-in-law with an effusive welcome. She was so astonished; so delighted. It was so long since she had seen them. And then to see them together! That had latterly become quite a rare treat. The good lady expatiated on this theme, until Castalia's brow grew gloomy with the recollection of her wrongs, her solitary hours spent so drearily, and her suspicions as to how her husband employed the hours of his absence from her. And then Mrs. Errington began playfully to reprove her for being dull and silent, instead of enjoying dear Algy's society now that she had it! "I am sure, my dear Castalia," said the elder lady with her usual self-complacent stateliness, "you won't mind my telling you that I consider one of the great secrets of the perfect felicity I enjoyed during my married life to have been the interest and pleasure I always took—and showed that I took—in Dr. Errington's society."

"Perhaps he liked your society," returned Castalia with a languid sneer, followed by a short bitter sigh.

"Preferred it to any in the world, my dear!" said Mrs. Errington, mellifluously. She said it, too, with an aplomb and an

air of conviction that mightily tickled Algernon, who, remembering the family rumours which haunted his childhood, thought that his respected father, if he preferred his wife's society to any other, must have put a considerable constraint on his inclinations, not to say sacrificed them altogether to the claims of a convivial circle of friends. "The dear old lady is as good as a play!" thought he. Indeed he thoroughly relished this bit of domestic comedy.

"But then," proceeded Mrs. Errington, as she rang the bell to order tea, "I have not the vanity to suppose that he would have done so without the exercise of some little care and tact on my part. Tact, my dear Castalia—tact is the most precious gift a wife can bring to the domestic circle. But the Ancrams always had enormous tact—give us some tea, if you please, Mrs. Thimbleby, and be careful that the water boils—proverbial for it, in fact!"

Algernon thought it time to come to the rescue. He did not choose his comfort to be destroyed by a passage of arms between his mother and his wife, so he deftly turned the conversation to less dangerous topics, and things proceeded peacefully until the tea was served.

"Who was that man that was coming in to the house with us?" asked Castalia, as she sipped her tea from one of Mrs. Errington's antique blue and white china cups.

"Would it be Mr. Diamond—? But no; you know him by sight. Or—oh, I suppose it was that Methodist preacher, Powell!"

"Powell! Yes, that was the name—David Powell."

"Most likely. He is in and out at all hours. Really, Algernon, do you know—you remember the fellow, how he used to annoy us at Maxfield's. Well, do you know, I believe he is quite crazy!"

"You have always entertained that opinion, I believe, ma'am."

"Oh, but, my dear boy, I think he is demented in real downright earnest now. I do indeed. I'm sure the things that poor weak-minded Mrs. Thimbleby tells me about him—! He has delusions of all kinds; hears voices, sees visions. I should say it is a case of what your father would have called 'melancholy madness.' Really, Algy, I frequently think about it. It is quite alarming sometimes in the night if I happen to wake up, to remember that

there is a lunatic sleeping overhead. You know he might take it into his head to murder one! Or if he only killed himself—which is perhaps more likely—it would still be a highly unpleasant circumstance. I could not possibly remain in the lodgings, you know. Out of the question! And so I told that silly Thimbleby. I said to her, 'Observe, Mrs. Thimbleby, if any dreadful thing happens in this house—a suicide, or anything of that sort—I shall leave you at an hour's notice. I wish you well, and I have no desire to withdraw my patronage from you, but you could not expect me to look over a coroner's inquest.'"

Algernon threw his head back and laughed heartily. "That was a fair warning, at any rate!" said he. "And if Mr. David Powell has any consideration for his landlady, he will profit by it—that is to say, supposing Mrs. Thimbleby tells him of it. What did she say?"

"Oh, she merely cried and whimpered, and hid her face in her apron. She is terribly weak-minded, poor creature."

Castalia had been listening in silence. All at once she said, "How many miserable people there are!"

"Very true, Cassy; provincial post-masters and others. And part of my miserable lot is to go down to the office again for an hour to-night."

"My poor boy!" "Go to the office again to-night!" exclaimed his mother and his wife simultaneously.

"Yes; it is now half-past eight. I have an appointment. At least—I shall be back in an hour, I have no doubt."

Algernon walked off with an air of good-humoured resignation, smiling and shrugging his shoulders. The two women, left alone together, took his departure very differently. Mrs. Errington was majestically wrathful with a system of things which involved so much discomfort to a scion of the house of Ancram. She was of opinion that some strong representations should be made to the ministry; that Parliament should be appealed to. And she rather enjoyed her own eloquence, and was led on by it to make some most astounding assertions, and utter some scathing condemnations with an air of comfortable self-satisfaction. Castalia, on the other hand, remained gloomily taciturn, huddled into an easy-chair by the hearth, and staring fixedly at the fire.

It has been recorded in these pages that Mrs. Errington did not much object to silence on the part of her companion

for the time being; she only required an assenting or admiring interjection now and then, to enable her to carry on what she supposed to be a very agreeable conversation, but she did like her confidante to do that much towards social intercourse. And she liked, moreover, to see some look of pleasure, interest, or sympathy on the confidante's face. Looking at Castalia's moody and abstracted countenance, she could not but remember the gentle listener, in whom she had been wont for so many years to find a sweet response to all her utterances.

"Oddly enough," said she, "I had been disappointed of a visitor this evening, and so should have been quite alone if you and Algy had not come in. I had asked Rhoda to spend the evening with me."

Castalia looked round at the sound of that name. "Why didn't she come?" she asked, abruptly.

"Oh, I don't know. She merely said she could not leave home to-night. That old father of hers sometimes takes tyrannical fancies into his head. He has been kinder to dear Rhoda of late, and has treated her more becomingly—chiefly, I believe I may say, owing to my influence, although the old booby chose to quarrel with me—but when he takes a thing into his head, he is as obstinate as a mule."

"I don't know about treating her 'becomingly,' but I think she needs some one to look after her and keep her in check."

"Who, Rhoda? My dear Castalia, she is the very sweetest-tempered creature I ever met with in my life; and that is saying a good deal, let me tell you, for the Ancram temper was something quite special. A gift! I don't boast of it, because I believe it was simply constitutional. But such was the fact."

"The girl is dressed up beyond her station. The last time I saw her, it was absurd. Scarcely reputable, I should think."

Mrs. Errington by no means liked this attack. Over and above the fact that Rhoda was her pet, and her protégée, which would have sufficed to make any animadversions on her appear impertinent, she was genuinely fond of the girl, and answered with some warmth, "I am sure, Castalia, that whatever Rhoda Maxfield might be dressed in, she would look modest and sweet, not to say excessively pretty, for I suppose there cannot be a doubt about that?"

"I thought you were a stickler for people keeping to their own station, and not aping their betters!"

"We must distinguish, Castalia. Birth will ever be with me the first consideration. Coming of the race I do, it could not be otherwise. But it is useless to shut one's eyes to the fact that money nowadays will do much. Look at our best families!—families of lineage as good as my own. What do we see? We see them allying themselves with commercial people right and left. Now, there was Miss Pickleham. The way in which she was thrown at Algy's head would surprise you. She had a hundred thousand pounds of her own on the day she married, and expectations of much more on old Pickleham's decease. But I never encouraged the thing. Perhaps I was wrong. However!—she married Sir Peregrine Puffin last season. And the Puffins were in Cornwall before the Conquest."

Castalia shrugged her shoulders in undisguised scorn. "All that nonsense is nothing to the purpose," said she, throwing her head back against the cushion of the chair she sat on. Mrs. Errington opened her blue eyes to their widest extent. "Really, Castalia! 'All that nonsense!' You are not very polite."

"I'm sick of all the pretences, and shams, and deceptions," returned Castalia, her eyes glittering feverishly and her thin fingers twining themselves together with nervous restlessness. "I don't know whether you are made a fool of yourself, or are trying to make a fool of me——"

"Castalia!"

"But, in either case, I am not duped. Your 'sweet Rhoda!' Don't you know that she is an artful, false coquette—perhaps worse!"

"Castalia!"

"Yes, worse. Why should she not be as bad as any other low-bred creature, who lures on gentlemen to make love to her? Men are such idiots! So false and fickle! But, though I may be injured and insulted, I will not be laughed at for a dupe."

"Good heavens, Castalia! What does this mean?"

"And I will tell you another thing, if you really are so blind to what goes on, and has been going on, for years: I don't believe Ancram has gone to the post-office to-night at all. I believe he has gone to see Rhoda. It would not be the first time he has deceived me on that score!"

Mrs. Errington sat holding the arms of

her easy-chair with both hands, and staring at her daughter-in-law. The poor lady felt as if the world were turned upside down. It was not so long since old Maxfield had astonished her by plainly showing that he thought her of no importance, and choosing to turn her out of his house. And now, here was Castalia conducting herself in a still more amazing manner. Whilst she revolved the case in her brain—much confused and bewildered as that organ was—and endeavoured to come to some clear opinion on it, the younger woman got up and walked up and down the room with the restless, aimless, anxious gait of a caged animal.

At length Mrs. Errington slowly nodded her head two or three times, drew a long breath, folded her hands, and, assuming a judicial air, spoke as follows:

"My dear Castalia! I shall overlook the unbecomingness of certain expressions that you have used towards myself, because I can make allowance for an excited state of feeling. But you must permit me to give you a little advice. Endeavour to control yourself; try to look at things with calmness and judgment, and you will soon perceive how wrong and foolish your present conduct is. And, moreover, you need not be startled, if I have discovered the real motive at the bottom of all this display of temper. There never was a member of my family yet who had not a wonderful gift of reading motives. I'm sure it is nothing to envy us! I have often, for my own part, wished myself as slow of perception as other people, for the truth is not always pleasant. But I must say that I can see one thing very plainly—and that is, that you are most unfortunately and most unreasonably giving way to jealousy! I can see it, Castalia, as plain as possible."

Mrs. Errington had finished her harangue with much majesty, bringing out the closing sentences as if they were a most unexpected and powerful climax, when the effect of the whole was marred by her giving a violent start and exclaiming, with more naturalness than dignity, "Mercy on us, Castalia, what will you do next? Do shut that window, for pity's sake! I shall get my death of cold!"

Castalia had opened the window, and was leaning out of it, regardless of the sleet which fell in slanting lines and beat against her cheek. "I knew that was his step," she said, speaking, as it seemed, more to herself than to her mother-in-law. "And he has no umbrella, and those slight shoes

on!" She ran to the fireplace and stirred the fire into a blaze, displaying an activity which was singularly contrasted with her usual languid slowness of movement. "Can't you give him some hot wine and water?" she asked, ringing the bell at the same time. When her husband came in she removed his damp great-coat with her own hands, made him sit down near the fire, and brought him a pair of his mother's slippers, which were quite sufficiently roomy to admit his slender feet. Algernon submitted to be thus cherished and taken care of, declaring, with an amused smile, as he sipped the hot negus, that this fuss was very kind, but entirely unnecessary, as he had not been three minutes in the rain.

As to Mrs. Errington, she was so perplexed by her daughter-in-law's sudden change of mood and manner, that she lost her presence of mind, and remained gazing from Algernon to his wife very blankly. "I never knew such a thing!" thought the good lady. "One moment she's raging and scolding, and abusing her husband for deceiving her, and the next she is petting him up as if he was a baby!"

When the fly was announced, and Castalia left the little drawing-room to put on her cloak and bonnet, Mrs. Errington drew near to her son and whispered to him solemnly, "Algy, there is something very strange about your wife. I never saw such a changed creature within the last few weeks. Don't you think you should have some one to see her?—some professional person I mean? I fear that her brain is affected!"

"Good gracious, mother! Another lunatic? You are getting to have a monomania on that subject yourself!" Algernon laughed as he said it.

"My dear, there may be two persons afflicted in the same way, may there not? But I said nothing about lunatics, Algy. Only—really, I think some temporary disturbance of the brain is going on. I do, indeed."

"Pooh, pooh! Nonsense, ma'am! But it is odd enough that you are the second person who has made that agreeable suggestion to me, within a fortnight. Poor

Cassy! That's all she gets by her airs and her temper."

"Another person, was there?"

"Yes; it was little Miss Chubb, and——"

"Miss Chubb! Upon my word, I think that Miss Chubb was guilty of taking a considerable liberty in suggesting anything of the kind about the Honourable Mrs. Ancram Errington!"

"Oh, I don't know about liberty; but, of course, I laughed at her; and, of course, you will too, if she says anything of the kind to you."

"I shall undoubtedly check her pretty severely, if she attempts anything of the sort with me! Miss Chubb, indeed!"

The consequence was, that Mrs. Errington went about among her Whitford friends elaborately contradicting and denying "the innuendos spread abroad about her daughter-in-law by certain presumptuous and gossiping persons;" and thus brought the suggestion before many who would not otherwise have heard of it. All which, of course, surprised and annoyed Algernon very much, who had, naturally, not expected anything of the sort from his mother's well-known tact and discretion.

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